

Abstract:

Discussions on initiatives to harness marine resources in the region¹

In small islands and coastal regions where ecosystems are closely linked, the proper and effective use of marine resources is critical to sustainability. Since the exploitation of marine resources in the Caribbean has traditionally been more concentrated within the 200-nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), significant efforts have been placed towards integrated coastal zone management and the sustainable use of coastal ecosystems. However, in the past 15 years following the entering into force of the Agreement regarding Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), new interest regarding the use of resources in the international seabed and High Seas has arisen. As a result, together with a deeper assessment of potential environmental impacts a coherent policy and regulatory framework becomes more relevant to sustainably harnessing marine resources in the Caribbean.

Establishing a clear distinction between resources under Part XI, and Marine Biodiversity, the presentation will examine relevant initiatives, including of the Organization of American States, such as the ReefFix and Geo-Caraibes projects, related to the conservation and/or use of these resources and services in the context of high-level regional policy framework. Furthermore, the presentation will describe the existing legal-institutional framework as well as analyze the importance of establishing the proper regulatory mechanisms to achieve long-term sustainability in a region where the knowledge of marine biodiversity is very limited and ecosystem services are critical to supporting livelihoods.

Examples from other regions, such as the crosscutting agreement established between the National Biodiversity Institute (INBio) and the Costa Rican Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAET), will be highlighted given their role in regulating biodiversity prospecting; an industry with great development potential in the Americas. The presentation will conclude by providing ideas for further discussion regarding challenges and opportunities, including within the work of the International Seabed Authority and the recent advisory decision of the Seabed Chamber of the Tribunal of the Law of the Sea².

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² Seabed Disputes Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Responsibilities and Obligations of States Sponsoring Persons and Entities with Respect to Activities in the Area (Feb. 1, 2011), available at http://www.itlos.org/adv_op_010211.pdf